



NEWS RELEASE

LOS ANGELES PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: Immediately

Release Number: 04-67

Contact: Frank Brancale (818) 552-3203

Internet Address: www.sba.gov/news/

CHARO-SBA Women's Business Center Fashions Success Plan To Assist Women Owned Public Relations Firm

There is a growing need for technical assistance to accommodate the dramatically increasing formation of business enterprises in the greater Los Angeles area. In its last fiscal year, the Los Angeles District Office (LADO) of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) financed 4,600 small businesses in the amount of \$1billion. To support a capital access program of this magnitude LADO is proud to rely on a varied network of technical assistance providers, who often shepherd the individual entrepreneur through myriad obstacles related to all loan processes. Los Angeles SBA District Director, Alberto G. Alvarado confirmed the value of the Agency's resource partners saying, "Without SCORE, the SBDCs, Women's Business Center, and our many other important resource partners, we could not possibly serve the number of small businesses that we reach out to on an annual basis. These entities are the technical assistance work horses, through whose collaboration the SBA's mission goals are met".

SCORE stands for the Service Corp of Retired Executives. Its members, retired executives who have had illustrious careers with leading business organizations, volunteer their time pro bono to assist aspiring entrepreneurs and start-up business owners. Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) offer consulting, technical assistance and business training, on a gratis basis to the SBA's constituent clientele. Both entities are funded through the SBA.

The Los Angeles District recently added a third jewel to its technical assistance crown. To specifically aid in the SBA's initiative to foster the growth of woman owned business in the Southland, the Agency recently funded the CHARO-SBA Women's Center. To understand how a business can benefit from an association with this new organization, witness the case of Fem Public Relations (Fem PR), a PR firm with a particular focus on the fashion industry.

Fem PR was established by Melinda Smith and Sharon Helfand to address the promotional needs of promising apparel, cosmetics, accessory, and footwear lines. The Toluca Lake based firm offers a full range of fashion oriented public relations services. If an up and coming cosmetic s business is in need of a press kit, or would like a special event planned to celebrate a new fragrance launch, then a visit with Smith and Helfand is in order. Fem PR is also expert at image consulting, as well as wardrobe and editorial placements.

In need of working capital, Fem PR initially contacted the SBA. The firm was triaged and immediately referred to the CHARO-SBA Women's Center for evaluation and assistance. Marlyn Garcia, the

center's business development officer (BDO), provided Melinda Smith and Sharon Helfand with a loan assessment and a detailed business evaluation. Ms. Garcia impressed upon the women entrepreneurs the importance of having a viable business plan that is founded upon realistic business assumptions as a major component of the loan package. She also counseled them on the firm's revenues and costs and instructed the business owners on cash flow and debt service.

Through the CHARO-SBA WBC's instruction and guidance, Fem PR successfully completed its business plan and became loan ready. Having completed this phase of the process, the company was prepared for capital access. They were helped with the loan paperwork which the WBC then processed for an SBA Express Loan.

Fem PR received its much-needed working capital. However, it also came away from the CHARO-SBA Women's Center with something extra. It seems that one of the WBC's former clients was a maternity clothing line that planned to take its business to another level and desired public relations assistance. As a result, both entities were matched and Fem PR gained a new client in addition to a loan.

SBA District Director Alvarado voiced his praise for entrepreneurs Smith and Helfand particularly for their wisdom and initiative to seek out appropriate help stating, "They advanced their cause by researching and availing themselves of the SBA's network of small business resources. Because they now have a known resource entity in the form of CHARO-SBA Women's Center and an established consulting relationship with Marlyn Garcia, they have greatly improved their chances for continued success in their business endeavors."

For additional information on Fem Public Relation Services, please contact Melinda Smith or Sharon Helfand at (818) 753-1753, or you may visit their website at www.fempr.com

Learn about the CHARO-SBA Women's Center programs by visiting www.charo-sbawc.com or contact Anita Rodriguez, Acting Director at (323) 269-0751 ext.609

To find out more about SBA Loan, Technical Assistance and other Programs and Services visit the Agency's user friendly web site www.sba.gov or call one of the following Economic Development Specialists at the SBA's Los Angeles District Office:

Sandra Buck (818) 552-3308
Chuck Edgington (818) 552- 3241
Barbara Madel (818) 552-3314
Fernando Olivares (818) 552 -3256
Juan Urbina (818) 552- 3244

To contact SCORE for a business consult, please call (818)552-3206. Additional information is available at www.score.org the SCORE web site.

#####

